

Insects' Riddles

Dr. Shamsul Islam Farooqi (Alig.)

Foreword

Allah Taala has created innumerable creatures in this universe, taught them to lead their lives and provided resources for their livelihood. These creatures also include animals. Among them are those that walk on four legs, those walking on two legs, those that crawl and those that fly in the air. These creatures are similar to human beings who is considered to be the master piece of Allah. Allah Ta'ala says: "There is not an animal that moves about on earth, nor a bird that flies on its two wings, but are creatures like you." (Al-Anam:38)

Insects too are an expression of Allah's strange creation. A careful thought about their structure, characteristics and activities will surely bring on your tongue words of praise, greatness and creativeness for Allah. Many of the animals, birds and insects have been mentioned in the Qur'an and attention of human beings is drawn as a warning and to learn lessons from various aspects of their lives.

Dr. Shamsul Islam Farooqi is a prominent writer for children. He has written several books with an aim to provide scientific information to children in an easy language. One of his books entitled "Hasharate-Qurani has already been published by the Markazi Maktaba Islami Publishers in

which he has provided scientific information about those insects which are mentioned in the Qur'an. In the present book, he has provided biological information about Ant, Silkworm and Locust. This information has been summed up in the story in such a way that children read them with great interest and unknowingly add to their scientific knowledge. One more attribute of this book is that children develop an interest in reading the Qur'an with a zeal to understand it.

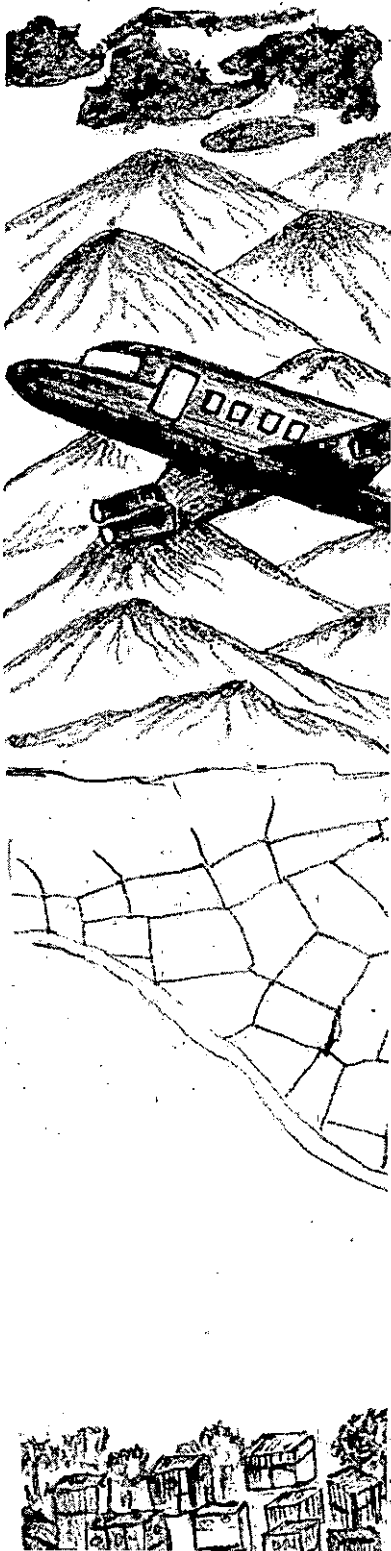
We pray that Allah may accept the author's attempt, its benefits be wide spread and he may be given strength to produce more such works.

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Insects' Riddles

As summer vacations commenced, every body planned to visit Srinagar. Aiman and Ameen were too eager to go there since long. Their Great Pa. Sharique was residing there. His daughter Shifa was only few years elder to Aiman. She, Aiman and Ameen were fast friends. Shifa had visited Delhi several times but Aiman had gone to Srinagar only once and that too when she was hardly one year old. Her mom used to say that she learned to walk there only for the first time. Ameen was Aiman's cousin who was extremely mischievous but highly intelligent and talkative boy. Though he had never visited Srinagar but with the God gifted imaginative mind, he would narrate things about Srinagar in such a manner as if every place was seen by him. Details told by his



Dada Abbu remained in his mind as such. Often he used to tell Aiman:

“Do you know Aiman that Great Pa’s house is very big. Mountain ranges can be seen all around from the upper rooms. Their tops are always covered with white snow. There are trees of Cherry and Apricot. Fruit-laden branches of Apricot even enter windows of the upper rooms so pick up and eat them whenever you feel like.”

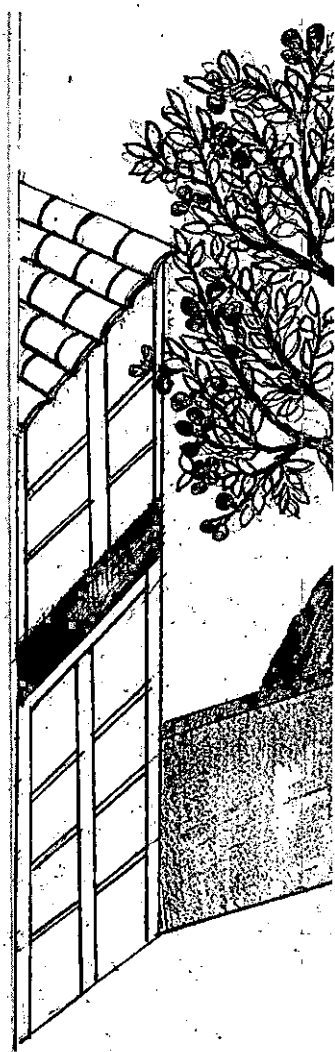
Ameen’s father Haris was the Youngest son of his father and Aiman’s father Khalid was elder to him whereas Sharique was the eldest son. Haris and Khalid had taken leave from their offices. However any leave was not needed for *Dada Abbu* as he had already retired from his service several years back. Soon this family left for Srinagar by Aeroplane. For Aiman and Ameen, it was first air experience. They were fearful by thinking that while taking off, they may not fall down. *Dada Abbu* told them not to worry about it

as the pilots are highly trained and experienced. They know how to fly and balance the aeroplane in the air. And of course, the ultimate protector is only Allah, on whom we must have full faith. He will take us Insha-Allah safely to our destination. *Dada Abbu* taught them a *Dua*,* and told them that this must be recited before undertaking any type of journey whether by air or by any other means. After reciting this *Dua*, children's unrest had really gone.

At about 12'o'clock, they landed at Srinagar Airport. Sharique, Shifa and her mother Raana had come to receive them. Every body felt very happy after meeting each other. Shifa, Aiman and Ameen were especially happy because now they would be free to play, roam about and talk together as much as they desired.

* مَبْنِي الدِّي سَخَّرَ لَنَا هَذَا وَمَا كُنَّا لَهُ مُقْرِنِينَ ﴿١﴾ وَإِنَّا إِلَىٰ رَبِّنَا لَمُنْقَلِبُونَ ﴿٢﴾ (الرغف: ١٣)

"Glory be to Him Who has subjected this to us whereas we did not have the strength to subdue it. It is to our Lord that we shall eventually return."



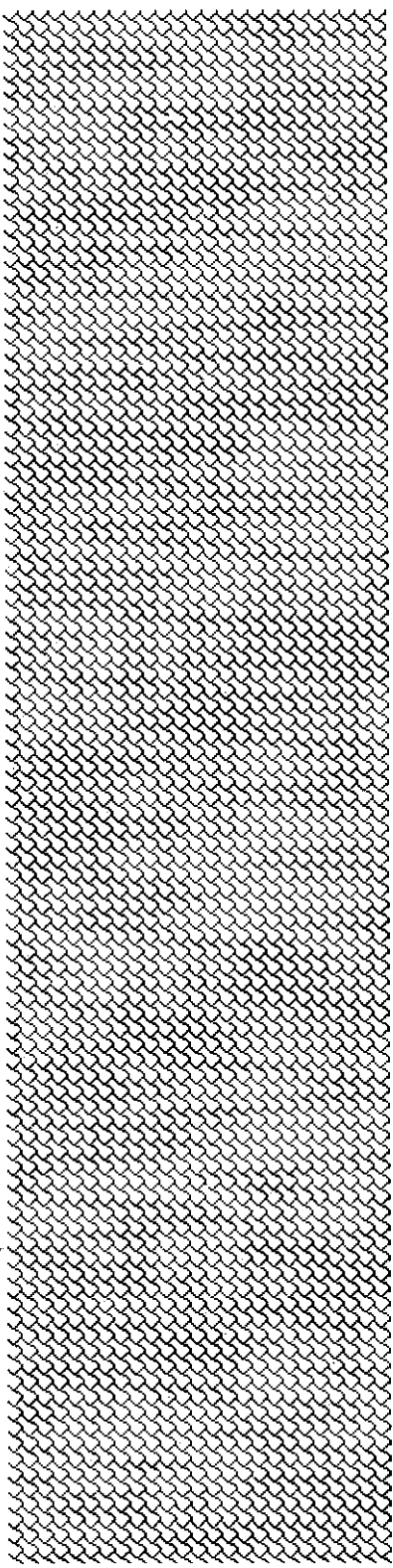
Delhi at 12 o'clock was quite hot but Srinagar was extremely fine and pleasant. Wherever you look, there were tall magnificent trees. Everywhere there was greenery and flowers were in such abundance that children had never seen before. In Srinagar, roses were in bloom everywhere like Bougainvillea at other places. They witnessed rose creepers covering walls of almost all houses on both sides of the roads. They thought when roads and houses of Srinagar were so graceful then what would be the beauty of those spots which are visited by tourists from all over the world.

Great Pa's house was really the same as described by Ameen. Trees of Cherry and Apricot were also there and the fruit laden branches of Apricot really entered the windows of upper rooms with the only difference that fruits were still green and unripe. They needed some more time to become red and juicy.

Great Pa. had made perfect

arrangements for the site seeing at Srinagar. All would leave the house early in the morning and come back late in the evening. They thoroughly explored every part of Srinagar. Places like Shalimar, Nishat, Botanical Gardens, *Chashme Shahi*, *Pari Mahal* and *Badam Vari* were so magnificent that one felt like going there again and again. Beauty of Dal Lake was beyond description. All around were beautiful green mountains. The lake was so huge that wherever you look at, there was water alone. Innumerable boat-houses of magnificent design and wood work were standing in a row. They hired a *shikara* and thoroughly enjoyed there for several hours. Gul-Marg was about 40 kilometers from Srinagar but was so beautiful that they felt themselves to be in the heavens.

Kandola Project of Gul-Marg was extraordinarily wonderful. Small trollies, hanging on wires and running on the same, would take people to the heights of mountains.



After reaching up, every one thoroughly enjoyed the beauty of snow.

In no time, one week passed away. The heaven of Pahalgam was yet to be seen. One day, when they were planning to go out, thick clouds covered the sky and it started drizzling. Besides, cool breeze also started blowing and by evening it became quite cold. In such a weather, there was no question of going out and all were confined inside the house. By night, it became so cold that the *Bukhari** had to be lighted. All sat around it, even the dinner was taken there only. After which the gathering was converted into a pleasant function. One quality is very much appreciable among members of this family. Whenever they faced an odd situation, all young and old took it sportingly, turning it into a pleasant event. Same thing happened that night also. Soon, a suggestion came from Haris:

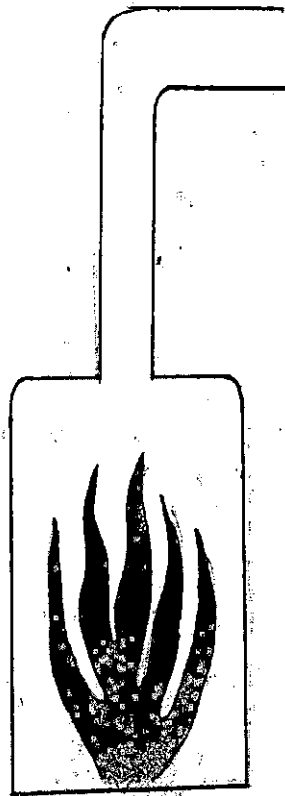
* Special structure having fire to keep rooms warm.

“Well, come on everybody, can’t we enjoy a camp fire tonight?”

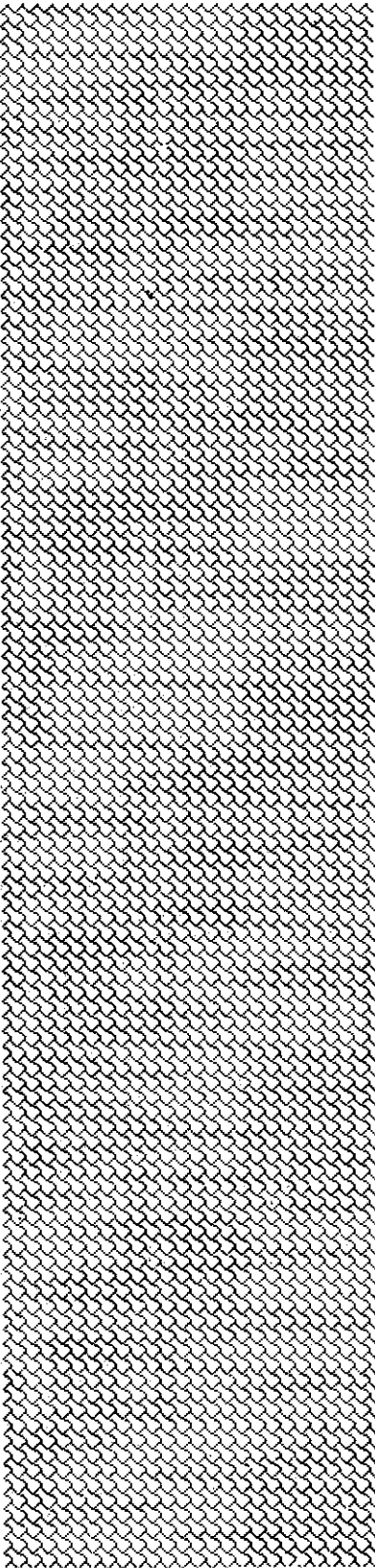
“But how? Neither we can go out nor there is a provision to lit a fire.” Shifa asked.

“I will let you know”, explained Haris: “consider this burning *Bukhari* to be fire and floor of the room where we are sitting, as field outside. Raana Bhabhi will serve us *Qehwa** and each of us will present items of his/her choice and so we have the camp fire.”

Suggestion was too good and was readily agreed by all. Soon cups of *Qehwa* were served and every body became ready to show his talents. To begin with, Haris himself came forward, presented mono-acting of his school days. After which, he also presented the famous Urdu poem “*Adle-Jahangir*” written by Maulana Shibli Nomani which was liked by all. Shifa, Aiman and Ameen presented beautiful poems whereas Ameen’s mother Iram made everybody laugh by her humerous jokes. Aiman’s



* A hot drink like tea.



mother Shagufta narrated events of Mulla Nasruddin which were very much appreciated by everybody. Raana came forward with a beautiful Ghazal by Ghalib in her melodious voice which was appreciated by all. Remaining persons were of somewhat serious nature. They liked informative talks and discussions. Ameen's grand mother normally remains quiet as she liked listening others but when all pressed upon, she presented a verse from Urdu poet Allama Iqbal:

Urdu: "*Harkate Mustaqil men Hay
Raz-e-Hayate Kaynat*"

*Jisko sukoon Naseeb Ho wo Koyi
Zindigi Naheen"*

English: The secret of life lies in
constant movement

One becoming stable has no life.

Listening this, Ameen's *Dada*
Abbu said:

"Wonderful! It is really a
priceless verse provided people try to
adopt it into their lives. Now let us
have some riddles which will be

asked by those who were so far keeping quiet. It was decided that the first riddle will come from Khalid. He said:

“Come on everybody, I will ask you a riddle about an insect. Can any one of you tell the name of that insect, about which it is said:

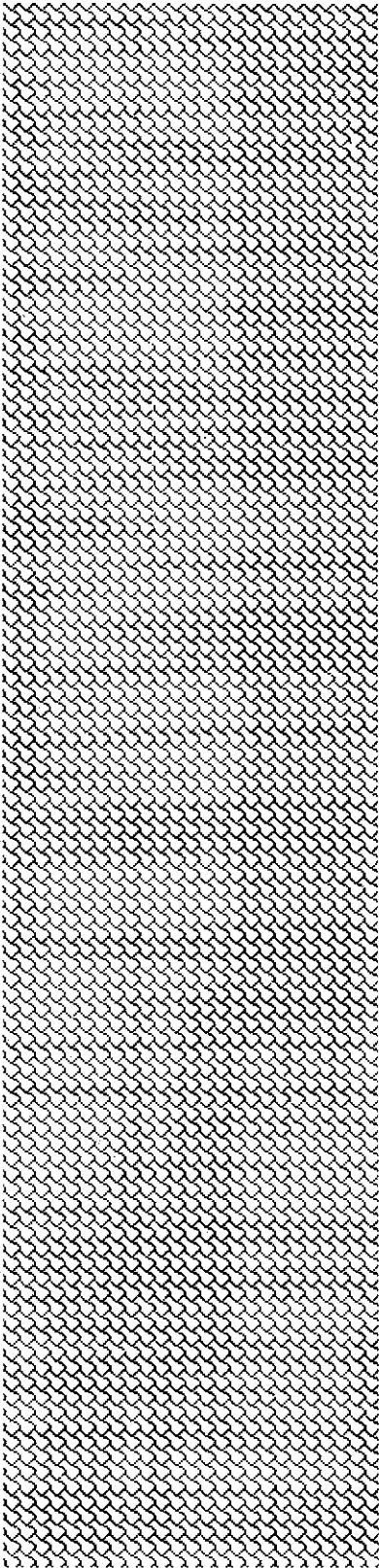
Urdu: *Nannhi Ne Bhi bhari uran*
 Jan Gawan Baithi Anjan

English: The little creature took a flight

But the ignorant fellow lost her life

The riddle was a new one and invited all to use their brains. Aiman’s *Dada Abbu* smiled and admirably looked at Khalid. Every body started thinking and requested Khalid to provide some clues. Khalid came forward with clues and said:

“Look! It is an important insect, so important that it is even mentioned in the Holy Qur’an. Nevertheless, one full surah is named after this insect.”



Hearing this, children, looked at each other. They had read the Qur'an in Arabic but were yet to read Urdu/English translation and thus the clue provided was difficult for them to understand. However elders immediately reached to the conclusion. But before someone would speak, Aiman's *Dada Abbu* who already knew the solution said:

“Well with the clue given, this is no riddle for elders and may be left only for young fellows. However, they have to be provided with fresh clues. So far as the question of its presence in the Qur'an is concerned, some of you may explain to them afterwards.”

Addressing Shifa, Aiman and Ameen Khalid said:

“Look! It is a small insect, easily found everywhere. It is firmly devoted to its work and is quoted as an example. It neither gets tired nor feels defeated but when about to die, the poor fellow develops its wings.”

The moment children heard

this they shouted: "Ant"

Listening this, Khalid's Abbu said:

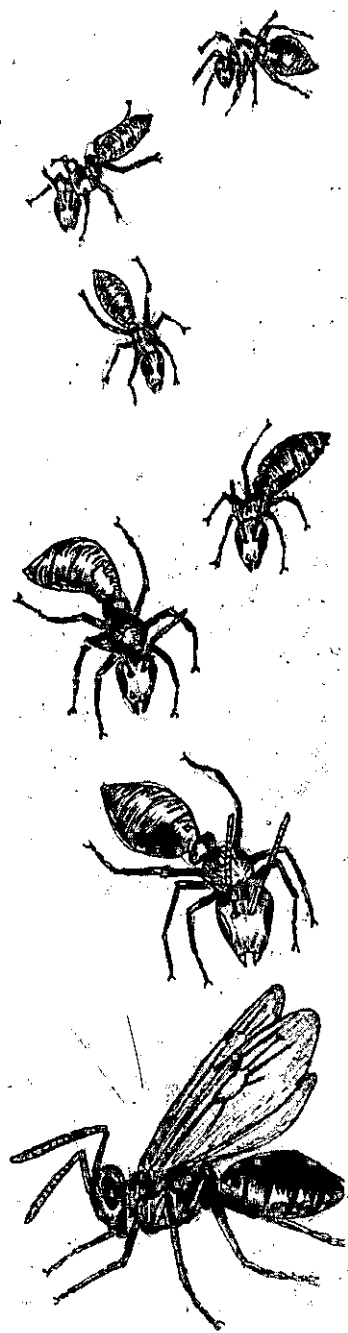
"Khalid you again gave a very clear clue with the result that children also solved the riddle as quickly as elders. Growing wings before death is used as a proverb which is known to all."

After solving the riddle, *Dada Abbu* said to his eldest son Sharique:

"Well Sharique, now you explain to children where and in which context, Ant is mentioned in the Qur'an."

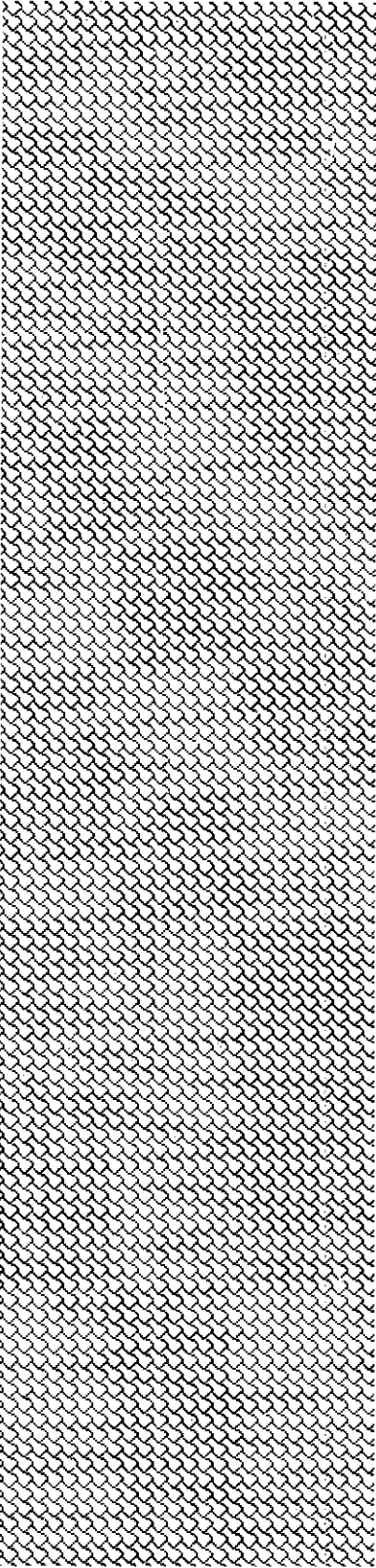
Addressing Shifa, Aiman and Ameen, Sharique said:

"You see Ant is called *Naml* in Arabic language and the 27th Surah in 19th Para of the Qur'an is named as '*Suratul-Naml*'. In Aya No. 18 and 19* of this surah, Allah has made



* لَنُفْلِ ادْخُلُوا مَسْكِنَكُمْ لَا يَحْطِئُكُمْ سُلَيْمٌ وَجُنُودُهُ وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ۖ فَتَبَسَّمَ
صَاحِبًا مِّنْ قَوْلِهَا وَقَالَ رَبِّ اَوْزِعْنِي اَنْ اَشْكُرَ رِعْمَتَكَ الَّتِي اَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ وَعَلَى الْوَالِدَيْنِ وَاَنْ اَعْمَلَ صَالِحًا تَرْضَاهُ وَاَدْخِلْنِي بِرَحْمَتِكَ
عِبَادَكَ الطَّائِعِينَ ۝ (النمل: ١٨-١٩)

"(Solomon was once on the move with them) until when they reached a valley of ants, one of the ants said: "O ants! Get into your holes, lest Solomon and his hosts crush you (under their feet) without even knowing." Smiling at the ant's utterance, Solomon burst into laughter and said: "My Lord! Hold me under (Your) control that I may render thanks for the favour which You have bestowed on me and on my parents, and that I may act righteously in a manner that would please You. Include me, out of Your Mercy, among Your righteous servants."



mention of His prophet Hazrat Sulaiman (A.S.). Allah says that when Hazarat Sulaiman (A.S.) and his army reached in the valley of ants then, one ant told its fellow ants to go inside their holes lest Sulaiman (A.S.) and his army may crush them.”

On hearing this, Sulaiman (A.S.) smiled and thanked Allah.

On listening this, Ameen questioned:

“How Hazrat Sulaiman (A.S.) could hear and understand the language of an ant? Do ants really talk?”

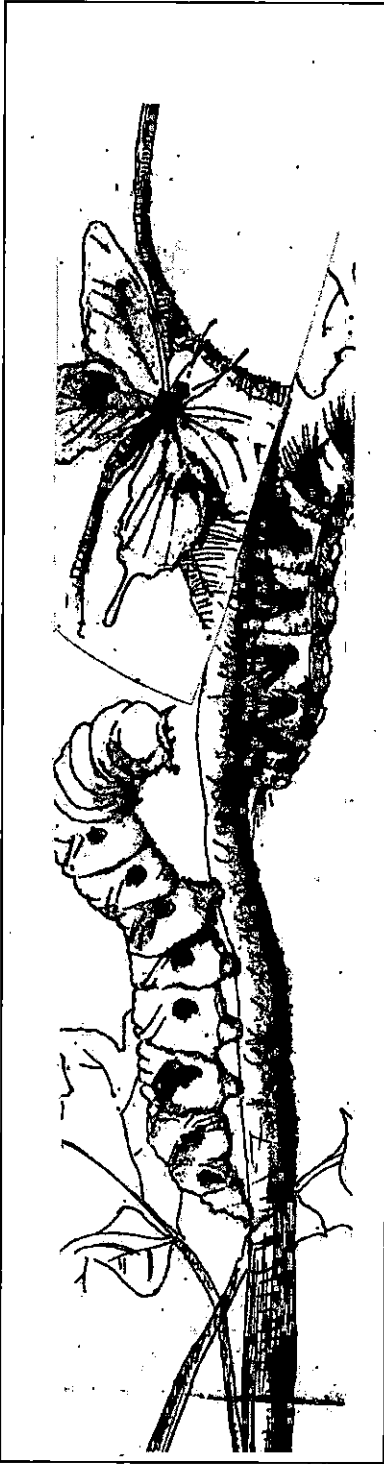
Sharique made him and others to understand.

“Allah had taught Hazrat Sulaiman (A.S.) the languages of all animals. Thus it may be said that if the ant spoke some thing, then Sulaiman (A.S.) must have understood it. Otherwise, according to the specialists, ants on various occasions release scents to convey messages and accordingly others act. For instance, if danger is to be conveyed

or fellow ants are to be informed about a food source, they have to fight with an enemy or message is to be conveyed for shifting house to a safer place. On all such occasions, scents are to be released for conveying these messages. Today, we have acquired this knowledge after making lot of scientific progress but surely we have faith that Allah can grant this knowledge and ability to His messengers whenever He wishes. Hazrat Sulaiman (A.S.) thanked Allah for attaining this ability.

After Khalid, it was Sharique's turn, so he said:

“It seems today only Insects riddle will be asked. My riddle is also about an insect and obviously after me Abbu's riddle may also be about the same as he happens to be an insect expert who has spent most of his life in carrying out research on Insects. Any way, now you attempt to solve my riddle and tell name of the insect which possesses characteristics as:



Urdu: “*Patton ka Tiffon – Resham ka kafan.*”

English: “Feed of leaves – Coffin of Silk.”

“Brother Sharique! Can we have some clues also”, Iram asked.

“Lot of clues are present in the riddle itself. This insect feeds on green leaves and its body is covered with a silken coffin. Another clue for elders is that although its name is not there in the Qur’an but its product is mentioned at several places.”

Aiman’s *Dada Abbu* was smiling this time also as this riddle was also easy for him, However others were scratching their heads. After a while, Shifa asked:

“Is the solution of your riddle the larva of a butterfly?”

“No, your answer is wrong but let me know how did you arrived at this conclusion?”

“Its very clear. Larva of a butterfly feeds on leaves, these form its tiffon and its skin is soft like silk, so perhaps it is called as its coffin.”

“Your thinking is correct to a great extent but it would have been more appropriate to term its skin as clothings whereas it is termed as coffin. You are in the right direction. Put some more efforts and surely *Insha-Allah* you will find the correct answer.”

After a lot of thinking, Aiman said:

“Then Great Pa! Is it that hairy caterpillar which after shedding its skin, gets transformed into a pupa and ultimately a moth? Can’t the shedded skin be called its coffin?”

Sharique could not hold himself from appreciating as Aiman had given excellent evidence. He said:

“Surely the riddle’s solution would have been the same, provided its author would have consulted you but I, am sorry to say that inspite of so convincing evidences your,



answer is incorrect.”

Iram was keeping quiet for long and thinking about the riddle. She said:

“Brother Sharique! You please answer one question that this insect’s coffin is like silk or silk is produced out of it?”

Before Sharique could make a comment, his father appreciated Iram’s intelligence and said:

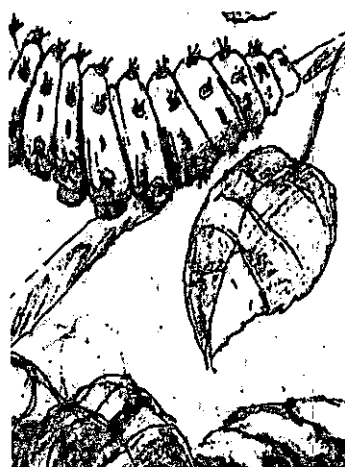
“Answering your question would mean telling you the answer.”

After this, the riddle had become quite easy for every body but still the last query was made by Raana. She said:

“Come on Sharique, you atleast let us know if the tiffon of that insect is leaves of mulberry?”

Sharique nodded and every body shouted: “Silkworm.”

While solving this riddle, it was very easy for elders to understand that Silk is a product of silk worm which



has been mentioned in the Qur'an at several places indicating that poised persons will wear silk garments in heaven.*

Now the last turn was of Sharique's father. When all became quiet and attentive towards him, he said:

“As mentioned by Shāriq, my riddle is also about an insect. It is a common insect and many of its characteristics are given in the riddle. In the light of these, you try to search the insect. Carefully listen to the words of the riddle and find out which insect is this:

Urdu: *Ghore Jaisa muh hay us ka,
moonchen jaise hiran ke
seengh,
Ānkhen hen heere ki
kaniyan,
Pankh hen us ke cheel
saman,*

* (الدخان: ٥٣) يَلْبَسُونَ مِنْ سُندُسٍ وَإِسْتَبْرَقٍ مُتَقَابِلِينَ

Attired in silk and brocade, they shall be arrayed face to face.



Tangen oont se milti julti,

*Gardan bail ki jaisi hay
Seena bilkul bichchu jaisa, dum hay
us ki sanp saman.*

English: Face of a horse, mustaches looking like deer's horns. Eyes like diamond chips, wings looking like those of kite. Legs like a camel, neck similar to that of oxen. Breast matching a scorpion, tail looking like a snake.

The riddle was quite ticklish. Every body started looking at each other. Seeing this, Sharique's mother said:

"Why you are making fool of them. I doubt if such a complicated insect exists. In case it is found, then surely the new generation has no knowledge of it."

"It's true, the new generation has never seen these insects but they have certainly read about them. Insects very much similar to those are not only seldomly witnessed by them but they have caught them also. You too are very much familiar with them

and it is just a chance that at present they are out of your mind. A simple clue may make you to visualize them.” Sharique’s Abbu explained.

After listening this, all elders and youngsters started thinking about them. Shifa, Aiman and Ameen were surprised to hear this. They were thinking how is it that according to *Dada Abbu*, we have not only seen similar insects but even caught them too. How is it that still they do not strike our minds?

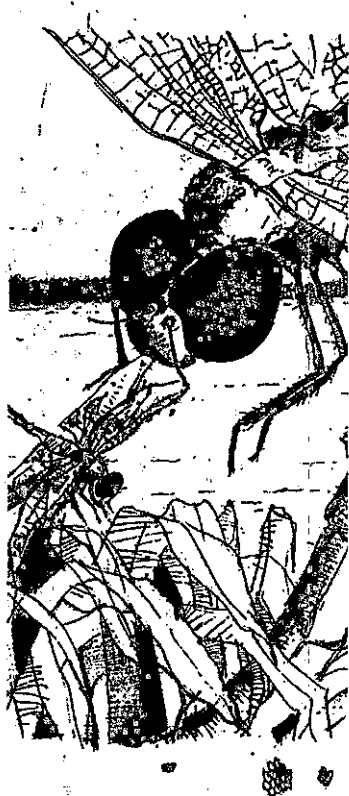
While thinking, Shifa’s mind got diverted towards the butterflies which she had caught on many occasions. Immediately, she put forward her suggestion:

“Is not the solution of riddle a butterfly? Many characteristic of this insect like moustaches, eyes, wings and legs are found in the butterfly and as you said, we have not only seen but caught them also.”

Before *Dada Abbu* could say yes or no, Haris gave his view:

“Well the same thing applies to





housefly also which even possesses eyes, looking like diamond chips.”

At the same time, Khalid also put forward his opinion:

“And how about the Dragonfly that flies like a helicopter. I feel the characteristics mentioned in *Abbu’s* riddle are more prominent in that.”

Listening the explanation of all, *Dada Abbu* said:

“Solutions given by all of you are incorrect. In fact the riddle refers to a particular insect only. Whereas it contains characteristics of that insect, it has general characters of insects also. Because you people have named different insects, the general characteristic tally with each. You have to name only that insect which possesses all the features given in the riddle.”

“All right, we will give some more thought but you please give us few more clues.” Said Raana.

Sharique’s father started giving more clues:

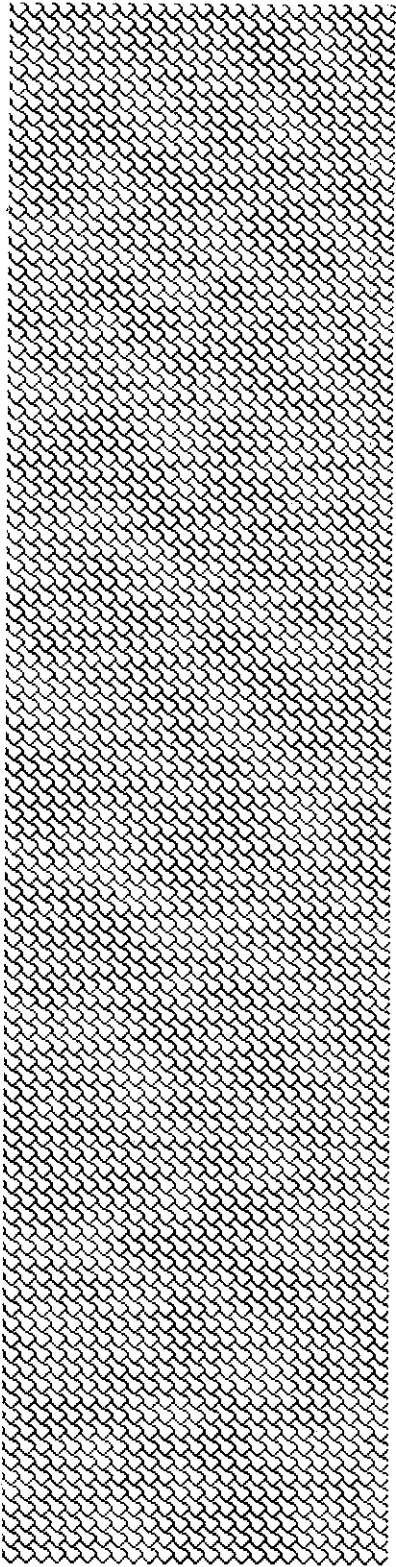
“Well, these insects are voracious feeders. They like green vegetation. Till it is available, they try to finish it off but by chance if that gets exhausted, then they do not hesitate even to eat their own young ones. They breed in sandy soil but afterwards make movement in any direction, provided food is available there.”

After listening to the clues, not only youngsters but even elders became confused, they were surprised because now the riddle had become much more complicated.

Under this situation, when one of the youngsters expressed defeat, *Dada Abbu* said:

“Don’t hurry up. By the grace of Allah, you all elders and youngsters are quite intelligent. If you exert a bit more, you will surely solve the riddle. As a matter of fact, these insects lead their life in two different states. During one state, their birth and feeding is as I just now told you. Because none of you has





witnessed that state, you got perplexed. However you are quite aware of the second state when their colour is usually green, they normally remain within green vegetation and eat the same. These insects have long jumps with the help of their thick and strong hind legs.”

Listening these clues, it was no more difficult for the elders to understand the riddle but even for youngsters, it had become very easy, so Aiman hurriedly said:

“*Dada Abbu* it is too much on your part. It was such a common insect but you made a complicated story out of it. Tell me is it not a *Tidda**?”

Dada Abbu was still keeping quiet but simply smiling. Seeing this, Aiman’s grand mother cried out:

“Why don’t you accept it now? Will you still go on saying No to them?”

* Grass hopper

After so much of pressure, *Dada Abbu* in a very low tone said:

“Not *Tidda* but *Tiddi*.”

With this reply, even Sharique could not keep quiet and said:

“This is really too much. I do not think there is any clue in the riddle which indicates the insect as male or female.”

“I also do not say that any such clue is present in the riddle, but the fact is this that *Tiddas* and *Tiddies* are two different kinds of insects.”

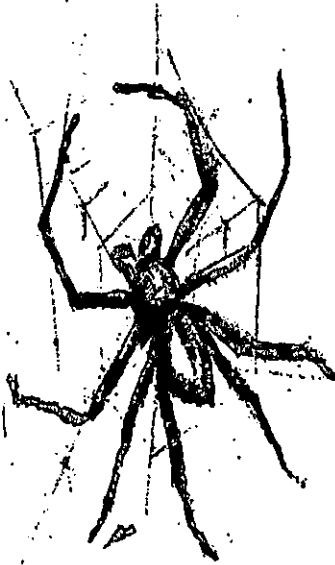
This was an extremely unexpected statement. Almost every body was highly surprised. Several voices were raised together:

“Is it really so?”

Taking interest in insects, Haris said:

“This appears to be an interesting topic to discuss, so why not we talk about them and learn from *Abbu*.”

“This is quite O.K.” Agreed everybody.



Before *Abbu* may explain the tangle of *Tidda* and *Tiddi*, Khalid interrupted.

“I understand, the tangle of *Tidda* and *Tiddi* is undoubtedly going to be very interesting but before that, let us try to find out if there is any procedure by which it is possible to separate insects from all other animals?”

Hearing this, Sharique also said:

“*Abbu*, Khalid is right. This question was coming to my mind also. People often use the term insects to animals like spider, red mite, scorpion and millipedes also. This does not appear to me as correct but I am unable to prove it. Similarly, this term is utilized for worms found in human stomach, bacteria and viruses also.

Listening to both of them, *Abbu* said:

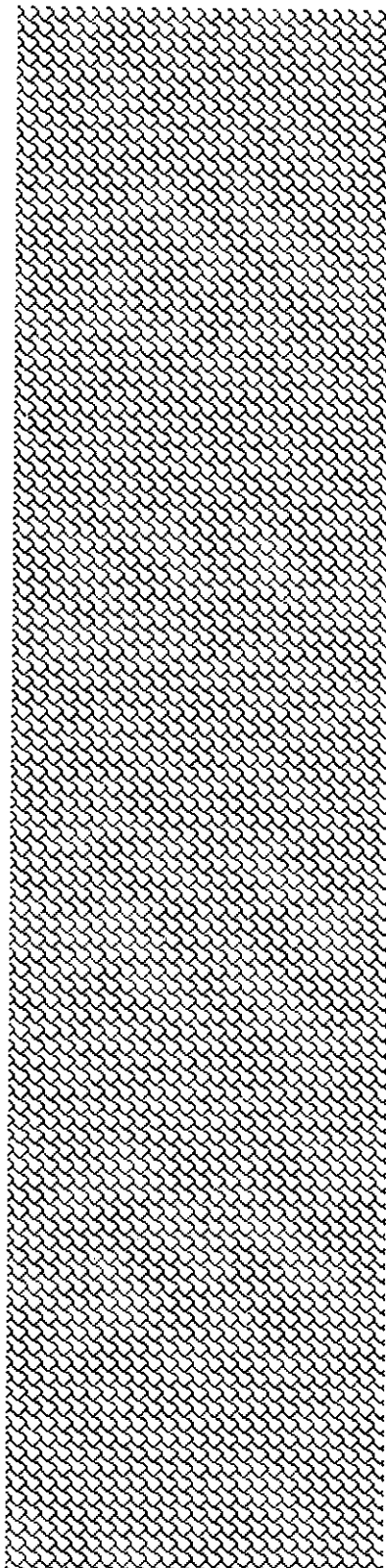
“I am very happy to know your interest for a very important thing. This is so important that it often



confuses not only youngsters but even elders as well. In fact, insect is a English word which refers to its body segmentation. Insect's body is divided into three regions: the head, thorax and abdomen. Head has two compound eyes and a pair of antennae. On the upper side of thorax, there are one or two pairs of wings and on the lower side three pairs of jointed legs. Abdomen also consists of several segments which are devoid of legs. Insects lay eggs, from which either emerge young ones similar to their parents or worm-like larvae which turn into pupae and from them come out fully formed adults. All those animals which possess these characteristics, are called insects." Sharique's father explained in detail.

"That means the spiders, red mites, scorpions and millipedes are not insects." Enquired Sharique.

"That is right. If you carefully see, the bodies of these animals are composed of only two parts, the head



and trunk and the number of legs are also different. There are four instead of three pairs of legs in spider, red mites and scorpion while each segment of a millipede is provided with one to two pairs of legs. Worms found in stomach of human beings form an entirely separate group whereas bacteria and viruses which are either single celled or acellular creatures, are kept in a different group, not considered by scientists even as living. These can better be called as germs.”

“Thanks *Abbu!* You have given us so clear characteristics of insects that now *Insha Allah* we will never get confused.” Said Khalid.

Aiman who was listening to the characteristics of insects very carefully, asked a question:

“*Dada Abbu!* you while explaining the characteristics of insects made mention of compound eyes and the antennae. I wonder how these look like?”

“You have put a very good

question. As a matter of fact, I myself should have explained these to you. Eyes of insects are called compound because each eye consists of innumerable lenses, each lense working like an eye. If you compare with your eyes, then each is composed of a single lense only. Dragon flies or several other kinds of flies may have even more than 50,000 lenses in each eye. The term antennae is used for the insects sense organs. These organs can be seen standing like an aerial on top of insects head. The word antennae is plural whose singular form is antenna.”

After listening to the details of compound eyes, Shifa said:

“That means insects must be able to see distant objects with much more clarity.”

“Unfortunately not. The poor fellows can only see nearer objects and that too in small segments only. When an object comes very near to the insect’s eye, each lense makes an



image of only that portion which comes exactly in front of it. Therefore insects can only see an object after putting all the images together as is done in a jig-saw-puzzle. That way, insect's eyes are very peculiar as they are magnificent to look at but poor in working."

"Now let the tangle of *Tiddas* and *Tiddies* be solved which, I am sure going to be very interesting." Iram said.

Dada Abbu started saying:

"Undoubtedly it is not only interesting but significant at the same time. Apparently, *Tiddas* and *Tiddies* both are insects of the same group which is characterized by short antenna. By entomologists, however, habits of both differ. Those called *Tiddas* are usually green and live individually within green grasses or plants. This means they do not have the habit of swarming. This habit continues throughout their lives, during which they hardly cause any losses to human beings."

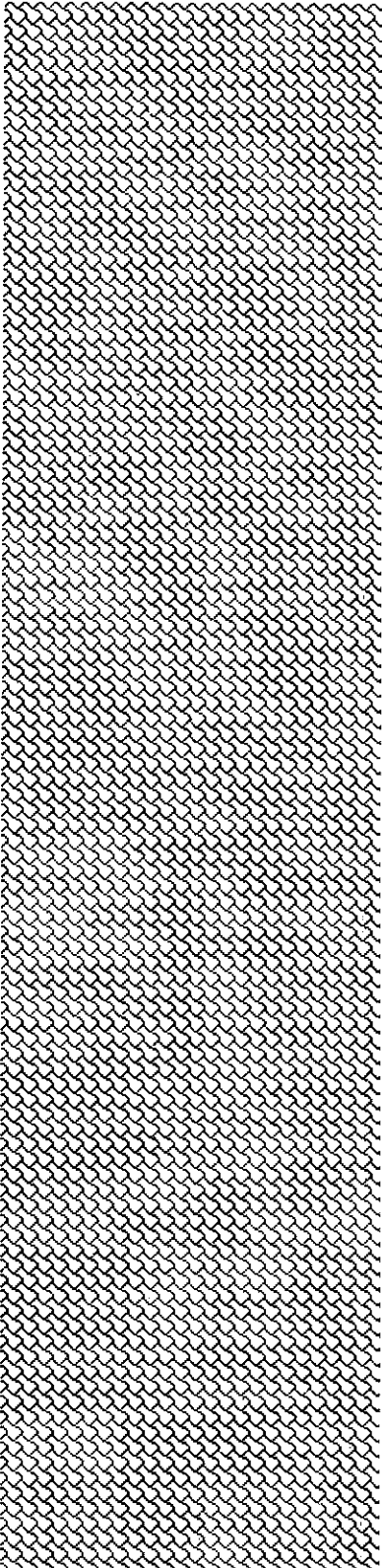
“On the other hand, *Tiddies* are of grey, blackish or yellowish in colour. Their wings have black spots and migrate as adults from one place to other by making very large swarms. Wherever they reach, they destroy all green vegetation and thus cause great losses to human beings.”

Dada Abba continued and further said:

“For *Tiddies*, experts use the word “Locust” which means a plague. These insects spread in an area like an epidemic disease and incur heavy losses. There are only eleven species found all over the world. Out of these three species occur in India, Pakistan and adjoining countries. In common language, these are known as “Desert Locusts”, “Migratory Locusts” and “Bombay Locusts. Most of the damage in Indo-Pak area is caused by the Desert Locusts.”

After telling this, *Dada Abbu* smiled a bit and said:

“Apart from this, there is one



more difference between *Tiddas* and *Tiddies* that *Tiddas* always remain *Tiddas* but *Tiddies* can be periodically changed to *Tiddas* also.”

“*Abbu!* Your information are no less than riddles themselves. So far we are not even able to clearly separate *Tiddas* from *Tiddies* and before that you added an entirely strange information that *Tiddies* may turn into *Tiddies*.” Khalid said surprisingly.

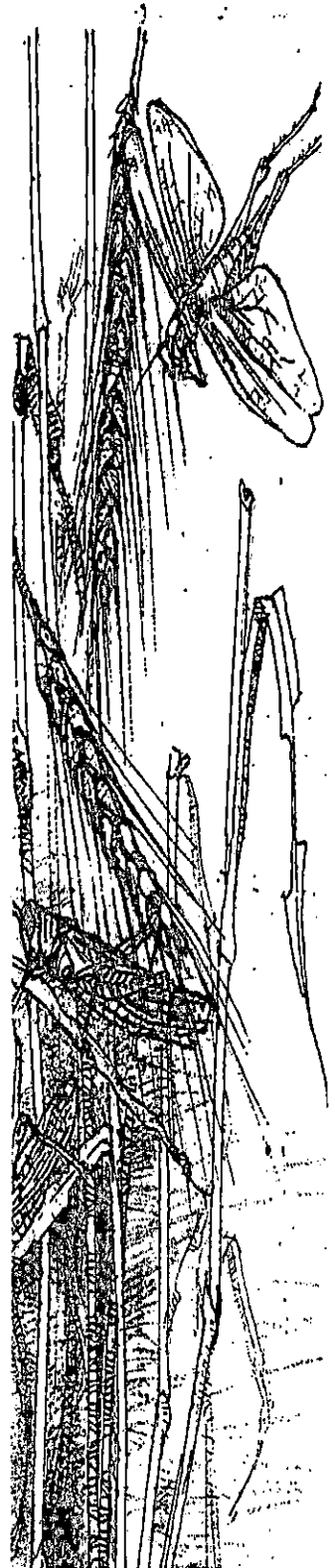
Pacifying everybody, Khalid’s father said:

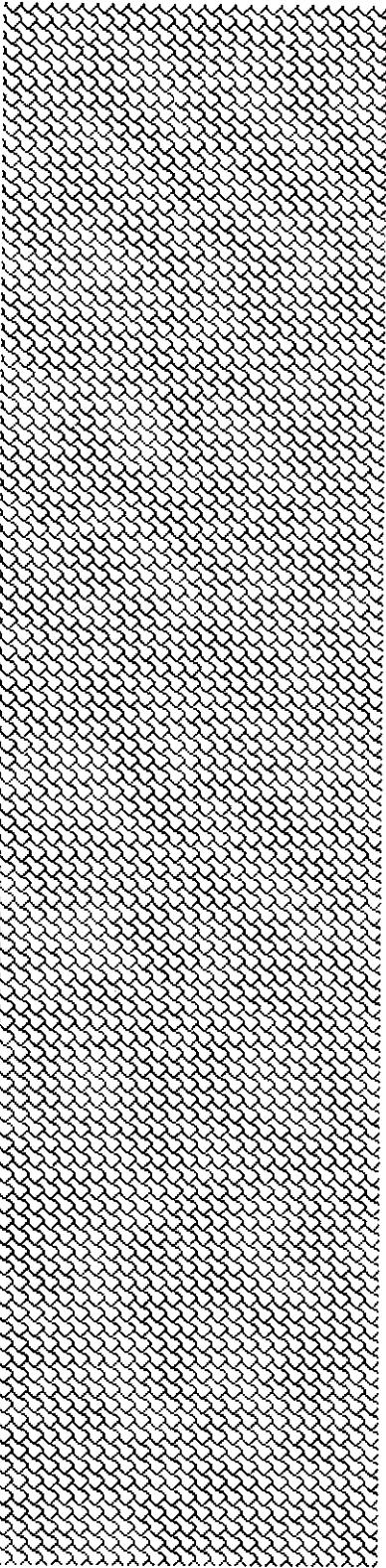
“Do not be so impatient. Have a little more patience and you will understand everything. I told you it is only periodically that the *Tiddies* may swarm, otherwise during rest of the time, they remain separately just like the *Tiddas*. At that time, it is really difficult to identify them from *Tiddas*. But the moment a swarming tendency starts, they can be easily separated.”

“*Dada Abbu!* We are asking the same thing from you.” Several voices

rose together. Continuing the description, Khalid's Abbu said:

“Have patience. I will let you know every thing. The *Tiddi* experts say that this change may occur after a gap of one to twelve years and is associated with weather. If weather is good, rains are heavy and green vegetation is intense, then the *Tidda*-like *Tiddies* start building their populations. On the contrary, if weather is dry, rains and greenery is less, then the rate of population building goes down and *Tiddies* start living separately like *Tiddas*. Experts observe their eyes. In *Tidda*'s eyes there is nothing unusual, whereas stripes are seen in the eyes of *Tiddies*. According to them, presence of three stripes tell that the swarm will not be formed but if the number of stripes increases to five, a swarming is indicated. I am sure, after this information, you will not have any difficulty in separating *Tiddies* from *Tiddas*.”





Ameen's grand mother who was very attentively listening the whole discussion made a remark:

"Really what has happened now-a-days that *Tiddi's* swarms are not to be seen. Earlier, they may be there after almost every year. The swarms used to cover the sky to such an extent that sun may disappear. In a way, these swarms were a heavenly curse. Sharique's *Abbu* may let you know that often in some areas, they may do such a wide-spread devastation which may cause a feminine and a large number of people would die."

On hearing her remarks, almost every body got stunned. It was difficult for them to imagin an insect which was so well known to Ameen's grand mother but not known to them and they themselves were quite ignorant about it. Khalid tried to confirm this:

"*Abbu* is it correct what mother is saying? Were these *Tiddies* really so devastating." *Abbu* replied:

“Yes my son, your mother is absolutely correct. *Tiddies* swarms were really so dangerous that they were considered to be a heavenly curse. There is a mention of this even in Qur’an.”

Shifa, Aiman and Ameen surprisingly shouted:

“Is it really so? *Dada Abbu.*”

“An account of this heavenly curse is given in *Surah-e-A’araf*. You know Pharoah was a very proud and cruel king of his time who would call himself as God. Allah Ta’ala sent Moses to guide him to the right path. To impress Pharoah and his people, Allah granted Moses with two miracles – a scepter, which would turn into a dragon and his shining hand which used to shine after putting under his arm’s pit. Apart from these, people of Pharoah were made to suffer from several curses so that they develop humility and softness leading a poised life. A mention of these has been made in

*Surah A'araf, Ayah 133.**

Out of these curses, one was that of *Tiddies*. In those days, ways and means to control *Tiddies* were not known and therefore heavy destructions caused by *Tiddi* swarms proved to be heavenly curse only. Pharoah and his people had become so notorious that they could not be brought back on the right path and ultimately Allah drowned them into the sea. There is no record of the amount of damages done to Pharoah and his people by the *Tiddi's* swarm but devastation records of some other swarms are available which can very well depict the losses that used to be caused by *Tiddi* swarms.”

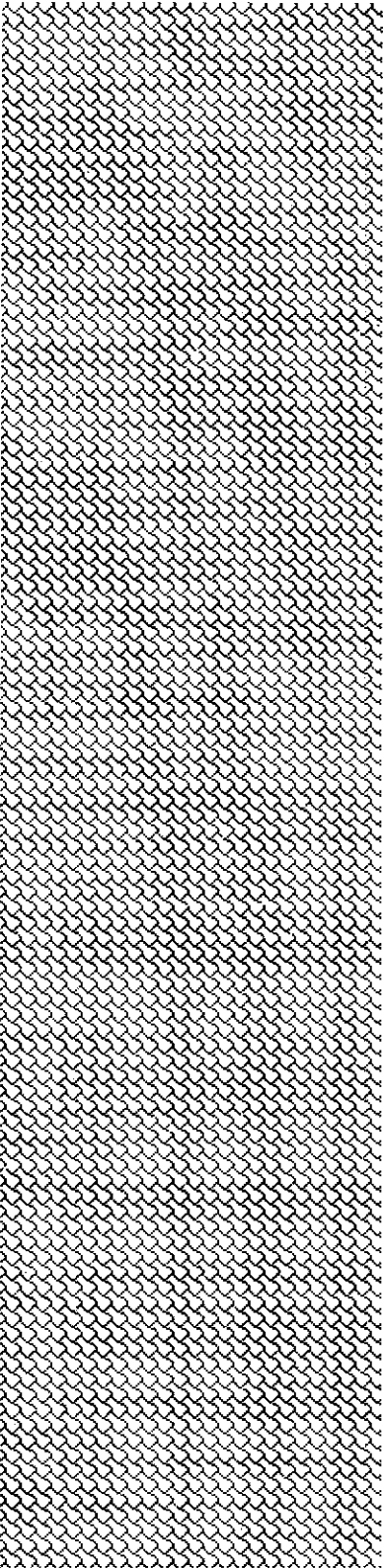
“Are such records available?”
Iram wanted to know.

* فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ الطُّوفَانَ وَالْجَرَادَ وَالْقُمَّلَ وَالضَّفَادِعَ وَالْدَّمَ آيَاتٍ مُّفَصَّلَاتٍ فَاسْتَكْبَرُوا وَكَانُوا قَوْمًا مُّجْرِمِينَ ﴿١٣٣﴾ (الاعراف: ١٣٣)

Then We afflicted them with a great flood and locusts, and the lice, and the frogs, and the blood. All these were distinct signs and yet they remained haughty. They were a wicked people.

“History records few such *Tiddi* swarms and after having their knowledge, only one starts fearing Allah. It is said that several years back, there came a *Tiddi* swarm in Africa which was spread within 2000 sq. meters. It used to take complete ten days for passing from one place. It can be well imagined how many *Tiddies* might be there in that swarm and the extent of damage by the same. Similarly, another swarm was recorded in South Africa during 1789 which somehow could not cross the sea but was killed and drowned in it. Dead *Tiddies* were driven to the shore where they formed a fifty miles long and three feet high wall. The smell of rotten *Tiddies* was reaching up to a distance of one hundred fifty miles. Think, if nature would have not been kind and the swarm would have not been killed, then what could had been the extent of damage to the people of that area.”

“Abbu did any such swarm was ever recorded from our country also?” asked Sharique.



“It was during 1952 that a big *Tiddi* swarm invaded Rajasthan. Even in those days, methods for their effective control were not available. People used to make noises and beat drums so that the swarm may not settle in their areas, otherwise nothing will be left. In a village Osiyan near Jodhpur, a woman went to drive off *Tiddies* from her fields and left her nine months old child lying in a basket at the boundary of her field. After some time, when she returned, the child was missing. She found only thousands of *Tiddies* adhering with his skeleton.”

This event made the children stunned. They could not imagine that these small insects could be so dreadful. Thinking about them, Shifa asked.

“So dangerous are these tiny insects!”

“Just imagine if these *Tiddies* could be so oppressive in 1952, what they might have done to Pharoah and his people in those days.” Told

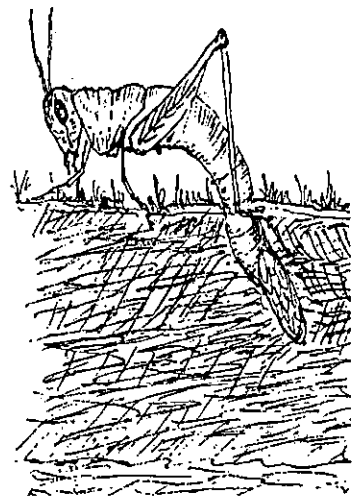
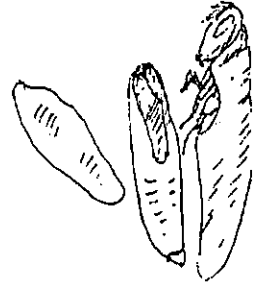
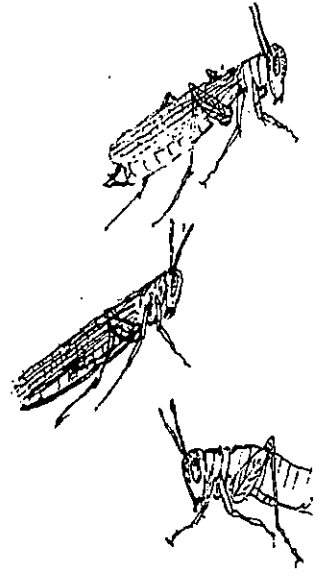
Aiman's *Dada Abbu*.

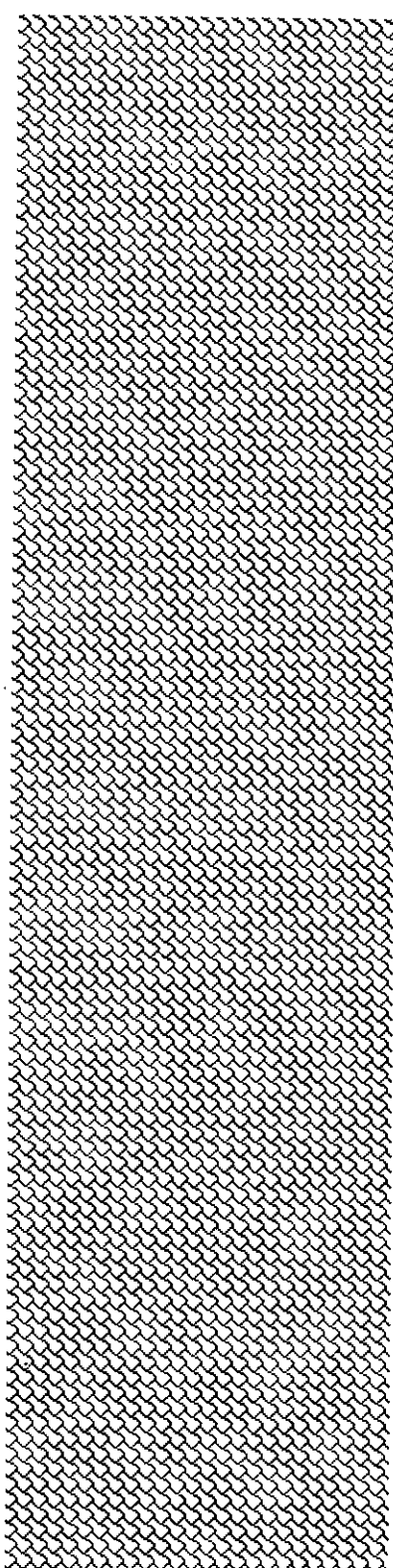
Shifa wanted to know as to why *Tiddi* swarms do not come these days.

"They are still there but because lot of efforts are made to control them, big swarm could not be formed and so the destruction caused is also not much. In Delhi, the last swarm was seen during 1962 only. At that time, neither you nor your parents were born." Told *Dada Abbu*.

"Would controlling of such big swarms be an easy task?" Enquired Haris.

"You are right. The fact is this that scientists have found their breeding places. These are desert areas which start from Africa and extend up to Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. Within India, these are in Jaisalmer, Barmer and Bikanair of Rajasthan. In the beginning, young ones of *Tiddies* do not have wings. They can't fly but simply move by hopping. At that time, it is easy to kill them. But once





their wings grow and they start flying from one place to another, it becomes very difficult to control them. At times they are controlled by spraying insecticides with the help of helicopters which is a costly affair.” Haris father explained in detail.

Hearing this, Haris put forward the next question:

“But *Abbu* will that not be difficult to search the young ones in the desert?”

“As a matter of fact, *Tiddies* select such places for egg laying in the deserts which are moist and have at least some vegetation. Egg laying starts after rains. Female *Tiddi* penetrates its abdomen about six inches deep into the sand. It lays about one hundred eggs in the form of a bunch and plugs the hole by producing a foam-like substance which after drying becomes harder like sponge and the eggs become safe from enemies. Each *Tiddi* repeats the process thrice during its life of about four months. Wingless

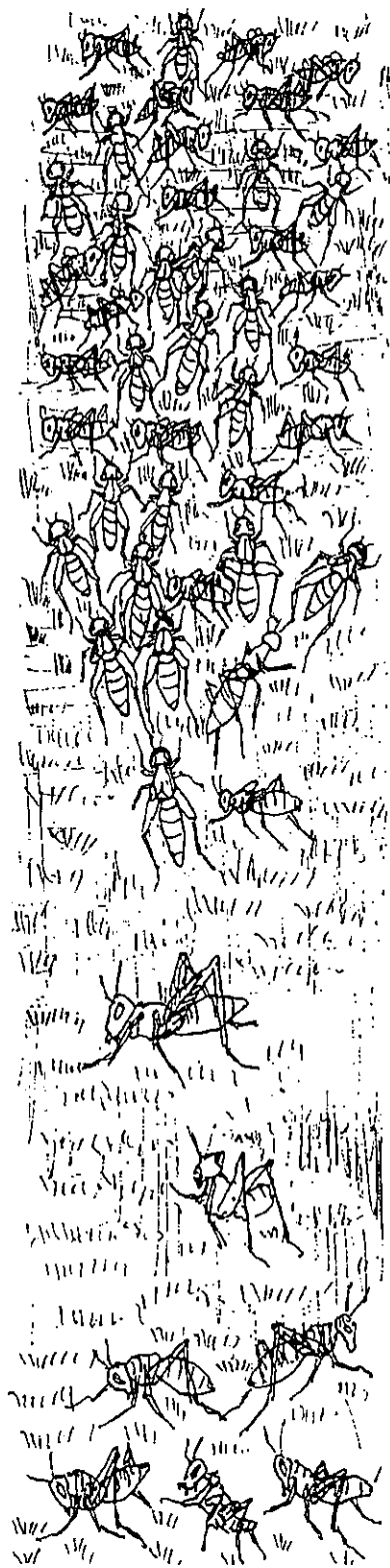
young ones emerge out by cutting the sponge and make a movement by hopping together as an army in search of food. In Aya 7 of *Surah 'al-Qamar'** of the Holy Qur'an, Allah Taala by citing their example says that on the day of judgement, people will come out of their graves with fearfull eyes, as if they are dispersed *Tiddies*.

Haris father further continued:

“The colour of young ones of *Tiddies* is yellow because of which they look like large yellow patches, moving in the desert. Long furrows are dug on their ways. They come hopping and get dropped into furrows. Insecticides are sprayed and they are buried there itself.”

“*Dada Abbu!* Is it possible to estimate the number of *Tiddies* in any swarm?” asked Shifa.

* حُشَعًا أَبْصَارُهُمْ يَخْرُجُونَ مِنَ الْأَجْدَاثِ كَأَنَّهُمْ جَرَادٌ مُنتَشِرُونَ (القر: ٤٢)



“Yes, why not. Experts have estimated that there are about one crore *Tiddies* in an area of one square Kilo metre. With the help of this, you can easily calculate the number of *Tiddies* in any of the swarms mentioned by me.”

“Can we also know the feeding requirement of these *Tiddies*?” Next question was put by Aiman.

“Experts have calculated this in the laboratory. According to them, one *Tiddi* consumes three grams leaves each day.”

Aiman was surprised to know such a little quantity and hence she said:

“This quantity is too less. How a feminine could be caused by feeding such a little quantity.”

“You think so as you are told about the feed of one *Tiddi* and only for a single day. Calculate the consumption of one crore *Tiddies* present within an area of one square kilometer only. The figures may compel you to loose senses.”

“Shifa started calculating:

“One *Tiddi* consumes 8 grams leaves, so one crore *Tiddies* will be consuming 50,000 kilos or will require 300 quintals of feed per day.”

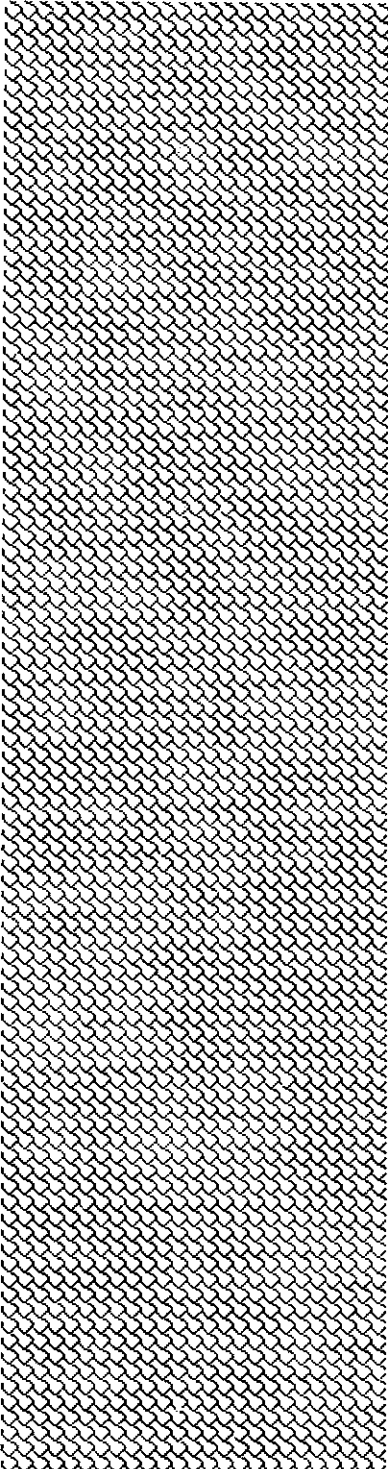
“Oh my God” She uttered at once. *Dada Abbu* then said:

“Well this calculation is for one crore *Tiddies* which settle in an area only for a single day. Swarms are normally much larger than this but suppose it is of this size only and remained within an area for several days, then also the amount of damage will be much higher. In case they are of the size told by me, perhaps you won’t be able to imagin the extent of destruction.

Ameen could not appreciate the destructive nature of *Tiddies* and said:

“If I happen to come across a *Tiddi* swarm, I will catch hold and chew them alive.”

“What are you saying. Don’t you feel disgusted by saying this?” said Aiman.



Listening to the conversation of both, *Dada Abbu* said:

“Ameen is not totally wrong. For us, this might be disgusting but it is true that people of several countries such as America, Japan and Arab are very fond of eating these *Tiddies*. For them, *Tiddies* are supposed to be a delicacy. These are sold at a high price like fish, prawns and deer meat.

“Is it so”, several voices came together.

This campfire was continuing since long and was quite successful. Everybody had thoroughly enjoyed it. Ameen’s *Dada Abbu* got up and said:

“Well it is quite late. Better you all go to your rooms and have a good sleep. In future, if we get an opportunity, I will let you know many more interesting things about insects, Insha Allah.

